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THOUGHTS IN RHYME

By Sarah Metcalf Phipps

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Sarah Metcalf Phipps

New York

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BY

SARAH METCALF PHIPPS

New York
THE MASON-HENRY PRESS
50 CHURCH STREET
1911

PS 3531
.H86T5
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...ED FROM
...RT OFFICE
MAY 16 1912

The MASON-HENRY Press
Syracuse and New York

©CL.A312921
No 1.

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Dedicated to
ONE I LOVE
A. G. K.

The Spider Web

The spider weaves, from hour to hour,
An exquisite web by an occult power;
'Neath a shady tree on a summer day
I watch with wonder its mystic way.

The lines intersect and form a part
Of a cryptic plan, a work of art,
Which fills the mind with admiration
For a dainty, a fair, a deep creation.

Each thread in the web so skilfully wrought,
With hidden purpose and meaning is fraught,
The filmy texture, the fragile line,
Unite and form a mystic sign.

Ah! could we but weave a life so fine
Where beauty is traced in every line
And e'en in our tears reflect the light
That shines in dew on the web so bright.

Like the spider we weave the web of fate
'Tis well to know, though we learn it late,
The glory or shame of life we spin
From the Power, the Will, the Spirit within.

The Bird at My Window

The sweetest bird
I ever heard
Sang at my window to-day
A tender roundelay.

On what he said
After he fled
I pondered deep and long:
'Twas a sweet and plaintive song.

Moonlight on the Sea

When o'er thy face the mobile moonbeams play
The light of thy smile enchanting leads the way
Into the rapture, the delight
Of the silent, of the mysterious night....
In the murmur of thy voice there is a luring stress
That soothes and wraps the soul in tenderest caress,
And as thou creepest near and nearer unto me,
It is as though with yearning arms, oh! sighing sea,
Thou would'st my form enfold in passionate embrace,
And all my being in thy charm enlace....
The spirit of love and night is whispering to me
Of the weird and mystic beauty of moonlight on the sea.

The Patter of Rain

I love the patter of rain,
Of rain upon the roof;
It soothes away dull pain
And holds tired thought aloof.

I feel a deep content,
The heart revives again—
With musings sweet is blent
The sound of pattering rain.

Witch-Hazel

The witch-hazel broods in the autumn woods
In a flood of sunshine mellow,
Its branches forked with magic are fraught
And tufted with flowers of yellow.

Its leaves of green and reddish brown
Upon the moist earth lie,
But the subtle fragrance of the flower
Is wafted to the sky.

The witch-hazel thus, methought, it tells
By its fine divining-rod
Of the secret mystery of life
In the wondrous plan of God.

The human form of earthly mould
When it has served its day
Like the fallen leaves returns to the sod
In its own appointed way—

But the essence rare, invisible,
On its upward course is bent
And the spirit of man ascends to God
Like the flower's bewild'ring scent.

The Ocean

Words cannot paint the ocean blue
With its shifting tints of turquoise hue,
Sparkling here in the sunshine bright
A sheet of shimmering, blinding light,
While there, a stretch of darker shade
Lies like a plain of dark green jade;
Yet farther, a line of mist so thin
A passing ship is traced therein,

Sailing o'er deeps where the billows roll
Like passions that surge in man's wild soul.

Turbulent, ceaseless, the sea's unrest
Echoes deep down in the human breast.
But beyond? beyond? in vain peers the eye,
Beyond is the realm where mysteries lie—

Sailing through space so immeasurably vast
Into the Infinite Ocean at last.

March Wind

O! for the sweet March wind of the Southland!
There to forget the region of snows,
Careless how fiercely the North wind blows,
Riots and swirls o'er ice-bound floes....
O! for the balmy breeze of the Southland!
In swaying pine-tops softly sighing,
Tenderly whisp'ring of love undying,
The soul in wistful sadness replying,
In the dreamy, love-laden air of the Southland!

My Sweetheart's Bouquet

Sweet eyes as deep as gentian blue
Whose depths the soul burns brightly through
Where dwelleth a love both deep and true.

Sweet lips as rich carnations red
That breathe the tender words once said—
Kiss, that from mem'ry ne'er has fled.

Soft silky threads of streaming hair
Wooing the breeze of the balmy air
Like the flower of the ribbon grass flaxen fair.

The mind of a lily, the heart of a rose,
Pansies the thought as it comes and goes
Warming the cheek as it softly glows.

Sweeter far and of fairer hue
Is a flower that never in garden grew—
I can not name it, but dear—'tis you!

Whatever betides or come what may,
Sweetheart, for you I've made the bouquet,
A tribute of love forever and aye.

My Daffodil

My precious flower! my daffodil!
The pretty flower thou gavest me!
With sweet and loving thoughts of thee
My heart and pulses thrill.

O! how much more it means to me!
So commonplace in others' eyes—
To me, a dear and cherished prize,
Because, my love, it tells of thee.

The token of a happy hour
Is my dear golden daffodil,
Its chalices pure love distil,
As with a kiss I press my flower.

April

April's child is of sunshine and showers—
(O! the caprice of happy hours!)
A moment of pleasure,
Joy without measure,
All the world gleams
Sun-flooded with beams—
Then comes the rush of blinding rain
And only the dark'ning clouds remain!

Life is not always tears and wiles,
Life has its share of beams and smiles;
Joys flit fast,
Showers do not last,
Clouds break away,
Behold! the sun's ray—
Buoying with hope—banishing fears
The beautiful rainbow of promise appears.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Jack-in-the-Pulpit appears to-day
And proclaims to all who come his way
A sermon of love, a message of spring,
Which Jack and all his companions bring—
Spring Beauty, Orchis, Anemone-Rue,
Blushing Rhodora and Violet blue,
And gay Wake Robin, while Adder's Tongue tells
The tidings of spring: the glad note swells
In throat of bird and song of brook
Which hums and ripples through shady nook.

All proclaim the season and hour
Of joy and life for bird and flower.
There in the midst of this multitude
In quiet and placid dignity stood
Jack-in-the-Pulpit—list! did he say
In the promise of Spring would dawn a day
Of heart's delight and desire-come-true?

I cannot believe it at all—
Can you?

Sunlight

The day was gray, the sky was overcast,
Trees, flowers, all forms in somber hue
Stood forth as though by a cruel blast
Blighted; but lo! heaven's own kind blue
Through a cloud-rift glimpsed—and then, at last!
The splendor and glory of the sun broke through....
Alas, it brought deep shadows too!

O wondrous Nature! by a law divine
Sunlight and shadows make the perfect days;

What radiant beauty when the
sunbeams shine
Through raindrops! when the
sun's bright rays
The darkest cloud with silver line.

Sunlight or shadows—heart-
riven, astray,
Nature reveals the perfect way.

Orchard House

The Home of Louisa M. Alcott

At foot of the fragrant pine-wood hill
There stands the little brown cottage still
Where dwelt Louisa in days of yore,
Louisa who penned enchanting lore.
I walked the path her feet had trod
Where wild flowers bloom in the verdant sod;
I peered intent through the window-pane
And saw in fancy her form again
Sitting serene in the ingle-nook,
Where, mayhap, she wrote that book
Which charmed the hearts of happy youth,
Inspiring them all with love and truth.

As my face pressed hard against
the glass
A waking dream there came to
pass
Of "Little Women" and "Little
Men"—
God bless them all is my prayer:
Amen!

The Trysting Place

With folded arms that rest on the railing
Of an old snake fence which borders the wood,
Bathed in the sunlight of day that's waning
The tall lithe form of a maiden stood.

A fair fresh flower, a child of nature,
Of rustic strength and lovely mien,
Part of the freshness and fragrance around her,
With beauty and grace that are rarely seen.

The molded chin on the arm is resting,
The soft brown hair is caressed by the breeze,
The fawn-like eyes are dreamily gazing—
I wonder what charm in the air she sees!

Is the young heart wakened to love's quick throbbing?
Does it feel the flutter of love's unrest?
Ah! who can divine the secret pondering,
The sweet dream hid in the pure young breast?

In the wood that broods in a perfect stillness,
Her ear expectant a sound has heard,
With joy and a keen delight she listens
To the notes of a wild and warbling bird.

But hark! the tread of a footstep is nearing—
The secret flames in her radiant face—
As her form in the arms of a youth's enfolded
The kiss is claimed at the trysting place.

The Tangle of the Trees

I lie and look through the tangle,
The tangle of swaying trees,
I watch the shimmering spangle
Of sunlight on the leas.
The stately elm and the willow
Cast a cool and spreading shade
And the green grass for a pillow
Titania's couch has made.
Where branches interlace
And sunbeams filter through
I seem to see thy face
And believe the vision true.
Bits of deep blue skies
Through half closed eyes I see
And I fancy those dear eyes
Are looking down on me.

Here and there meanwhile
Are gleams of dancing light
That are like the radiant smile
That fills me with delight.
I watch the flickering shadows
That all around me play
And through my memory flows
Sweet thought of a bygone day;
Through the boughs light breezes steal
And my cheek is softly fanned,
With ecstacy I feel
The caress of thy dear hand.
Thy presence fills the air....
Hark, how the wild bird trills—
'Tis thy voice soundeth there
And all my being thrills!
O! is the vision true
Or is it only seeming?
Doth my heart but picture you?
And am I only dreaming?

The Water-Lily

The lily hideth fold in fold
Of petals pure a heart of gold;
What sweetness in her breast concealed!
What loveliness to be revealed
By the magic touch of the sun's bright ray,
By the warm embrace of the God of Day!

Like love that's hid, not yet exprest,
Nor yet awake in the maiden's breast—
But love's sweet pledge shall be fulfilled
And her heart of love be stirred and thrilled,
Yes, steeped in a golden rapturous bliss
By the mystic power of a lover's kiss.

The Meadows

Beautiful meadows with ricks of hay!
Sight of you carries me far away
Into a land of enchanting dreams
Caroling birds and the hum of streams,
Gazing and wond'ring with wistful eyes,
Longing, perchance, for a glad surprise!
Blossom of hope and of heart's desires,
Land of delight where one never tires!
Moving in cycles, O restless soul,
Can you ever attain that happy goal?
Or is fate like words which, alas! suggest
Only the shadow of all that's best.

Wandering heart, come back—do not stray—
For here and now we'll have our play
Roving in meadows with ricks of hay.

To Alice

On Her Thirteenth Birthday

Just thirteen happy years ago
When the earth was white with its cover of snow
And the air was filled with ringing chime
Of the blessed, joyful, Christmas time—
Into the world came a baby child
With eyes like stars, yet blue and mild.
Then grew she into a little maid
And all that ever can well be said
Could never tell of the bonny grace
That shone in that dear and dainty face.
Now time has led with loving hand
Through childhood's sunny fairy-land

That little maiden pure and good
Into the realm of womanhood.
A tender message wings its way
To wish all joy to her glad birth-
day.
Adieu, dear child, for now 'tis
mete—
The winsome little woman to
greet.

The Waning of Summer

Now that summer is on the wane
The smooth false foxglove blooms again;
The flowers of the blazing star appear
And I feel that autumn is very near.

How brief the days of August grow,
How quickly they glide into sunset glow!
The breath of summer lingers still,
Howbeit the twilight air is chill.

We've come, alas! to the parting ways,
Adieu must bid to summer days,
From their beauty and pleasure as loth to part
As lover true from fair sweetheart.

But love's bright spell and summer must pass
Like shadows that flit and dance o'er the grass,
With autumn leaves the grass is strewn,
The rapture of summer is gone—so soon.

Good-bye, sweet summer!—behold, I see
How the goldenrod leans upon the lea,
The purple aster is waving there
And I know that autumn is in the air.

Her Portrait

Are you truly all you seem—
A thing of beauty, a lovely dream?
All that your face and form suggest
Of inner beauty, the highest and best?
A beauty of soul beyond compare
Which has of love a bounteous share?
Standing so straight, so gracefully posed,
With a far-off look in the eyes half-closed,
With a lurking smile as in dream half-glad
Or in revery sweet though somewhat sad....
Such beauty reveal'd in the mortal mold—
Can spirit a form more divine unfold?

"The Eternal Feminine"

The sea! the sea! the beautiful sea!
She can both fair and treacherous be,
She lures with her charm
Concealing all harm—
But beware! mayhap there is danger for thee.

The sea, like fair woman, is often capricious
And though her embraces be soft and delicious
And her radiant smile
Doth sweetly beguile,
'Neath beauty enchanting lurk forces pernicious!

With face so lovely and mien so true
Can treachery lurk in the sea so blue?
Alas! woe betide
If a heart should confide
In an element subtle and volatile too!

In nature "the eternally woman's" the sea;
Every day, every hour, her moods disagree,
With a smile, with a frown,
She can drag a soul down,
To the depths of unfathoméd misery.

Moonlight

There is witchery in the moonlight,
There is love in the languorous air;
It stirs a longing in my heart
That is more than I can bear.

As I sit alone and listen
To the whispering of the leaves
I feel they know my secret
And how my spirit grieves.

Their soft sweet agitation
Breathes a sentiment akin
To the dream of bliss and longing
That thrills my heart within.

In charmed suspense I ponder
On the sweetness of the dream,
On the music of the tree-tops,
On the murmur of the stream.

O! the mystery of the moonlight!
It has wrought a magic spell
In the air and rustling leaves,
And in my heart as well.

Jewels

To A. G. K. on Her Eighteenth Birthday

Jewels I bring for thee to wear,
Jewels to deck thy bonny brown hair;
A pearl of rainbow tint to rest
And lightly lie on the fair young breast;
A ring of sparkling sapphire blue
Thy finger to grace with its lovely hue;
Rubies of bright and tender red
Like drops of love from a heart that's bled,
Beautiful jewels to adorn thee always—
Love-thoughts to brighten thy fête to-day!

Remember, dear, there are jewels rare
Of priceless worth and far more fair
Than any that dazzle the outward eye,
Jewels that deep in the kind heart lie;
Exquisite workmanship wrought by art
Vies not with gems, the gems of the heart.
Adorn'd with these all thy presence bright
Goodness diffuses, aye, joy and delight,
Illumines the world with a loving thought—
Life with kindness and beauty is fraught.

Cherishing inwardly love without measure,
This is, indeed, the jewel to treasure,
This brings the rapture of heaven so near
That we live in a paradise, now and here!

September Days

The air is filled with a purple mist,
The sun is veiled in haze,
I close my eyes and dream away
The soft September days.

Delicious languor fills the soul
With a sense of things remote,
And through the lulled and drowsy brain
Vague sweet memories float.

On brown and tawny grass I lie,
On grass that once was green,
And I muse on the summer glory gone,
On the beauty that once has been.

On the song of birds that now has ceased,
The fair and sunny weather,
The pleasant walks, the tender talks,
That we have had together.

And my heart doth ask the question sad,
"Does nothing in life endure?"
A love so deep, so true as ours,
There's nothing in life more sure!

But whisp'ring through all in this world of time
Is the sigh—"we pass away"—
For all things change, alas! and pass
Like the misty September day.

The Autumn Leaf

In the mellow autumn days there's
a feeling in the air
As of longing and of sadness, one
that borders on despair.
But, sad heart, why must you sor-
row? 'neath the fallen leaf's
decay
Sweetly sleeps the hidden promise
of a brighter, happier day
In the glorious budding spring-
time; under nature's rule and
reign
All in due time, after rue time
comes the joyous spring again.
Symbol is the autumn leafage—
symbol every tree and flower

Of the change that's wrought in all things at the true appointed hour.
Sweetly, safely, all reposes in the heart of Mother Earth:
Patience! all shall live hereafter, in the beautiful new birth!

October

The blue smoke fills the October air,
The charr'd scent wanders everywhere
Of burning heaps of autumn leaves;
Stripped of their crowns the grand old trees
Stand grim with naked arms outflung
And wail for the glory from them wrung:
List to the mournful wind and hear
A requiem for the dying year!

The flowers are faint and fade away
In the fragrance of a bygone day;

Through the blue mist a sound is heard
The farewell note of a lingering bird,
Lacking alas! the happy ring
And joyous carol of birds in spring. . . .
Now, 'tis the music of memories sad,
Refrain of a song that once was glad.

Mournful to see around us lying
Tokens and signs of decay and dying—
Yet nothing can die, for like to the sun
When its appointed course is run
It vanishes only to rise again
In other-where worlds, beyond our ken:
Our cherished bonds though death may sever
Love and life endure forever.

Autumn Days

The golden autumn days—
What shadows deep they cast!
They waken mem'ries dear
Of happy years long past.

The summer days have fled
With all their warmth and glow,
The flowers of brilliant spring-time,
The joys of long ago.

With all the musing sad
On things that might have been,
There's hid some thought of cheer
The heart has locked within.

We find, when we have reached
Life's downward sloping path,
Long shadows on the grass,
And life's long aftermath.

Then come the days to glean
The harvest of our years,
The fruit is bitter-sweet
Of joy, regret and tears.

But when the winter comes
To spread its shroud of snow
And autumn glory's gone
The way that all things go—

What matters it at last?
Life's span is spent, we say—
All's laid beneath the snow,
All gone, the golden day!

December

Ah love! do you remember
That bright warm day in May?
Long years ago, so far away—
That first sweet kiss?
(O, dream of bliss!)
But now—it is December.

Dear love, do you remember?
Through the hawthorne lane we strayed,
The words you whispered, the vows we made—
The years between
That intervene?
For now—it is December.

My love, we both remember
That youth's sweet dream is past,

But O! the love of the heart
doth last
Into the shade
Of the twilight made
By the cold and bleak December.

A Happy Christmas

What means the joyous peal of bells?
What wondrous story the chiming tells?
'Neath mistletoe, holly and Christmas green
Does the heart the sacred lesson glean?
In glad receiving and gladder giving
Is there really the spirit of love and of living?
Mayhap in festivities gay and wild
Is forgotten the tale of the dear Christ-child.

His was the gift of sacrifice
That would make of our world a paradise;

A Christmas tree in your heart let grow
That will bear a love-token for all below,
Some sacrifice made, some service given,
Some good to others for which you have striven—
This is the spirit, this is the gift,
Whereby you may many a soul uplift.

Thus may the season of Christmastide
Bring love and light that truly bide,
Bring songs of praise and joyful sounds
Which follow where heartfelt love abounds,

Bring "peace, good will to man on earth,"
The air will then be filled with mirth,
A Happy Christmas! will be found
And echoed all the world around.

The Vigil of New Year's Eve

When e'er I think of thee, dear heart,
Whose life went out in giving birth
To that sweet image, thy counterpart . . .
In the smile that breaks in dimpled mirth
O'er her face, so winsome and so fair,
In eyes so tender, true and mild,
In the sunlight of her rippling hair,
In the face and form of thy own dear child
Thou livest again: I seem to see
In the flickering fire through blinding tear
A vision, vivid and bright, of thee,
And thy presence seems so near
—so near!

Thus as my midnight vigil I keep
Of the dying year, of the fading flame,
I ponder on death's mysterious sleep....
But hark! the pealing bells proclaim
A new born child to Father Time!
And a note of joy drives back the tear:
"Life is in death" sounds in the chime
That ushers in—New Year.

Moods

What means this sigh and sadness?
One moment bright and gay—
Then quickly flies all gladness
To gloomy thoughts a prey.

A sunbeam through the curtain
Reflects elusive light,
Its ray is most uncertain;
Cloud-chased, it soon takes flight.

Sad Heart

Oh sad and sorrowing heart,
Why sit alone and apart?
There is work in the world for you
Which sadness unfits you to do.

Life's suffering, turmoil and din
Are wrought through selfish sin;
There is so much self in sadness
And sweet sacrifice often in gladness.

Oh sad and hungry heart,
How selfish and erring thou art!
To lose one's life is to gain
All the sweetness and love that remain.

Only in following faster
The sacred word of the Master,
Service for others giving—
This is the joy of living.

Cow-Bells

At eventide when e'er I hear
The cow-bells tinkling far and near
I fell the lure—the strange sweet spell
That's wrought by the chime of the tinkling bell.
With yearning is my spirit fraught,
Tinged with sadness all my thought—
Eyes tear-laden—and I weep
While the shadows round me creep—
I feel the lure, the sweet, strange spell
Wrought by the charm of a lowly bell.

Good-Bye

A good-bye sigh
A tearful eye—
The sun still shines but the world
is drear;
Alas, how void—thou art not
here!

The days were gay
And sped away,
Too fleeting, too swift were the
days of yore—
The hours are now twice twenty-
four.

'Tis sad to part.
Oh lonely heart,
Life was once radiant with joy
and light,
But now o'er all is darkest night.

Behold! afar
A beaming star
That gleams with hope! for a
while we part,
But love abides for aye, dear
heart!

Who Knows?

What voice in my heart is calling
Down the long vista of years
Awaking a sadness and longing—
The eyes all tears?

A far-off echo of ages
Of a life that's been lived before:
A book of unwritten pages,
A blank—nothing more.

Is the heart to its influence heir?
The pain, the sorrow, the bliss,
All the burden that now we bear . . .
The key, now, to this?

In future estate supernal
Will spirit the secret disclose?
Ah the mystery of life eternal!
Whence—whither—who knows?

Look Within

The light within us, nigh and nigher,
Will lead us upward high and higher:
The light that lures us in the star
We need not seek it from afar.

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